



Toe Walking

Commonly Asked Questions



★ What is toe walking?

Intermittent toe walking is considered normal while a child is learning to walk. It is then considered atypical after the child is 2 years old, or is on their toes more than 50% of the time they walk. Often a parent's observation may sound like "they seem more comfortable when they walk on their toes" or "their legs seem tighter than other kids."

★ What causes toe walking?

There are several reasons why a child may walk on his/her toes, so one is unable to make a further diagnosis based on this behavior alone. The causes of toe walking range from muscle tightness to sensory processing disorder, to the Autism Spectrum, or it could be idiopathic which means that there is no known cause.

★ Does my child need therapy?

Left untreated, long-term toe walking may lead to: joint contractures (shortening of the ligaments and joint capsules) in the feet, ankles, and knees; muscle imbalance; compensation in the knees, hips, or back leading to future pain or breakdown; tendonitis at the ankle; poor balance and increased risk of falling; and pain in the legs and back.

★ What would therapy involve?

Determining your child's current range of motion and a gait assessment, and then individualized stretches to increase mobility, and exercises to decrease muscle imbalance. Significant tightness may require the use of night splints which are braces that are worn while your child sleeps to gently stretch out her ankles and calf muscles.

★ How long does therapy last?

It is important to remember that every child is different, and any possible underlying cause may change the length of care. Your therapist will specifically tailor your child's treatment plan to meet your child's individual needs. Your child's outcomes will also depend on consistency with the home exercise program and attendance at therapy sessions.